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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002367

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINR IZ

SUBJECT: JOINT US, UK, DANISH DEMARCHE TO MOI ON PRISONER ABUSE

REF: A) BAGHDAD 1681 B) REMLER-PILZ EMAIL 6/1/05

Classified By: Classified by David M. Satterfield, Charge d'Affaires, f
or reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) SUMMARY. Charge joined British Charge and Danish Ambassador in a June 1 joint demarche to Minister of Interior Baqr Jabr on allegations of prisoner abuse in Basrah. UK Charge provided an intelligence report implicating the Basrah Police's Internal Affairs Division and Investigations Support Unit of crimes, including the death of a detainee whom British and Danish forces had handed over to the police. Charge, British Charge, and Danish Ambassador expressed grave concern over the numerous allegations of abuse by Ministry employees and told Jabr that those found guilty of crimes as result of transparent investigations and fair trials must be brought to justice. Jabr reiterated that respect for human rights is his first priority, said he would not tolerate such abuses, and promised to launch a public investigation into the Basrah allegations. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) Charge joined British Charge Tim Torlot and Danish Ambassador Torben Getterman on June 1 to demarche Minister of Interior Baqr Jabr on prisoner abuse charges against the Basrah police. UK Charge outlined the case of Abbas Allawi, a suspected terrorist whom British and Danish forces had handed over to the Iraqi Police (IP) in Basrah. While in the custody of the IP, Allawi, who was reportedly held in an illegal Ministry of Interior (MOI) facility during his 10 - 13 April detention, was allegedly tortured and beaten to death.

3. (S) An autopsy performed by the Iraqis as part of an investigation initiated by the Basrah Governor and Chief of Police substantiated charges that Allawi was beaten to death. UK Charge provided Jabr with an HQ 12th Mechanized Brigade intelligence report that implicates three members of Basrah's Department of Internal Affairs and Investigations Support Unit (ISU) of assassinations, kidnappings, intimidation, bribery, threats against the judiciary, and illegal attacks against the citizens of Basrah. The report specifically implicates the ISU's Lieutenant Abbas Munis for the torture and murder of Allawi. Those three individuals have been suspended, said UK Charge, and he emphasized that the investigation into these allegations must continue unimpeded. The problem, he said, is far more widespread than indicated in a single report.

4. (S) Grave concerns regarding the Basrah situation, said UK Charge, extend to MOI as a whole and were the reason for the joint demarche. He emphasized the importance of investigating such allegations of abuse, ensuring perpetrators are tried by a fair and transparent judiciary, and bringing those found guilty to justice. UK Charge pointed out that the crimes of corrupt IP are well known on the streets of Basrah and said the Minister needs to show the Iraqi people that MOI will treat everyone fairly.

5. (S) The Charge added that such actions do not only affect the police and prisoners, but the general public as well. He emphasized that MOI must ensure the fair treatment of all individuals from arrest to the disposition of a case. Charge also told Jabr that all MOI prisoner holding facilities need to be under the proper jurisdiction. (NOTE: Per reftel, MOI still maintains facilities that belong under Ministry of Justice jurisdiction per CPA Order 10. END NOTE.) Charge expressed the highest regard for Jabr's consistent focus on supporting human rights and said how the Iraqi people and the world see such cases handled is key to their confidence in the system.

6. (S) Jabr reiterated what has, thus far, been a consistent message, identifying respect for human rights as his first priority. He insisted that such disregard for the rights of the people would not be tolerated and said he would open an investigation within the week on the allegations reported by HQ 12th Mechanized Brigade. Those involved, he said, would be brought to Baghdad to be publicly investigated and punished accordingly. However, he cautioned, it would take time to correct the problems facing MOI regarding human rights abuses.

COMMENT

17. (S) Jabr appeared to be sincere in his insistence that he would not tolerate human rights abuses by MOI employees, offering as evidence of his commitment the recent removals of several high-level MOI officials, to include the Deputy Minister for Police General Hekmat, who was suspected of human rights abuses such as the establishment of death squads. However, increasingly, MOI and its various components are implicated in human rights abuses, based on reports of human rights activists, Sunni contacts and media reports. Clearly, it will be a challenge for Jabr to implement a change of culture in a system that has previously not considered the rights of the individual. In the short-term, however, the question is whether MOI will actually follow up by investigating the Basrah allegations and bringing to justice those found guilty of criminal behavior. END COMMENT.

18. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, Minimize considered.
Jeffrey